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C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 001512

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/30/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [NO](#) [CE](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: NORWEGIANS SEEK INSTRUCTIONS FROM OSLO IN FACE OF
CRITICISM FROM NEW FOREIGN MINISTER

Classified By: Charge' d'Affaires, a.i. James F. Entwistle for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Norwegian Ambassador Hans Brattskar told Charge' August 30 that he is seeking instructions from Oslo on how to proceed in the face of continuing public criticism of the Norwegian peace process facilitation role. Brattskar confided he is particular angry about public comments new Foreign Minister (and Presidential sibling) Anura Bandaranaike made about the Norwegians during his recent trip to New Delhi. (Anura is quoted in the local papers this morning that he wants India "to try to influence the Europeans in particular who have been misled by the Norwegians away from the LTTE" and that the Norwegians have been providing "misinformation" about the real nature of the LTTE.) Brattskar also said he had found an August 30 op-ed hatchet job in the English language Daily Mirror on Norwegian DFM Vidar Helgesen to be beyond the pale. (The op-ed, a long rambling attack on just about everyone involved in the peace process by one of Colombo's more rabid journalists, states that "Helgesen is the human face of a psychopath" and "We have been Helgesen's slaves for too long." The piece also blames Helgesen for the August 12 assassination of then-Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar and implies that it would be appropriate for Helgesen to meet the same fate.)

12. (C) Brattskar told Charge' he will seek instructions from Oslo and then intends to call on Foreign Ministry Secretary Palihakkara August 31 to convey concern at the Foreign Minister's comments and note that while Norway remains committed to its facilitation role, it will not go down well with Oslo if Norway's involvement becomes a political football in the upcoming Sri Lankan presidential election. Brattskar said he would give a readout on his discussion with Palihakkara, as well as an update on his efforts to arrange a cease-fire agreement (CFA) implementation meeting, at a Colombo co-chairs meeting Charge' is hosting on September 1.

13. (C) Comment. Norwegian frustration over Anura's comments is understandable and there is little doubt that anti-Norwegian sentiment will be stirred up as election fever grows. We will continue to tell the government and other parties here that we think the Norwegians are doing a fine job and have full U.S. support. Some of Brattskar's frustration undoubtedly comes from his lack of success at setting up a CFA meeting. Press reports this morning state the LTTE continues to refuse to meet in no-man's land south of Kilinochchi for security reasons. The real reason probably is that, with a Presidential election in the offing, the LTTE sees no reason to come to the table with a lame duck administration.
ENTWISTLE